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Common grammatical and rhetorical
errors in freshman themes as seen at
the University of Illinois

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COMMON GRAMMATICAL AND RHETORICAL ERRORS

IN FRESHMAN THEMES AS SEEN AT THE

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS

by

RALPH EARLE TIETJE

THESIS FOR THE DEGREE OF BACHELOR OF ARTS

in the

COLLEGE OF LITERATURE AND ARTS

of the

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS

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THIS IS TO CERTIFY THAT THE THESIS PREPARED UNDER MY SUPERVISION BY

Ralph Earle Tietje

ENTITLED *A Study of the More Common Gram-
matical and Rhetorical Errors in Freshman
Theses at the University of Illinois.*

IS APPROVED BY ME AS FULFILLING THIS PART OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE

DEGREE OF *Bachelor of Arts*

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PREFACE

No one who has read and corrected college freshman themes can have failed to notice that certain errors seem to occur in all of them and that the same marks of correction appear repeatedly. It was this which first led me to believe that such errors might be classified with good results. The advantage which would be gained was plain; for if the mistakes were once listed in some detail, and not under the general heads of punctuation, spelling, and the like, the task of correcting them would become easier. Furthermore, if the causes of the errors could be located, there was no question but that the correction would become still less difficult. It is with this end in view that I have attempted to treat of the common grammatical and rhetorical errors in freshman themes.

I may say here that this thesis is primarily destructive and not constructive. It recognizes the fact, that freshman themes are faulty, and seeks to point out wherein the errors lie; but it makes no attempt to suggest remedies for them. For the author realizes that the teaching of rhetoric is a problem which has not yet been satisfactorily solved; and he feels that he is not competent to even suggest a method. Errors and causes will be discussed but solutions are left to those whose experience along these lines has made them capable.

However, all the difficulties of the situation are not connected with finding the remedies for the defects. In treating of the common grammatical and rhetorical errors as seen in freshman themes, one must first decide what "common errors" are; and

this is the difficulty. If one says they are those which are frequently made by a number of people, common errors, in freshman themes at least, become few; for only a small percentage of the students in Rhetoric I make the same mistakes. Their errors may be, and are, of a type, but in marking fifty themes the reader might not meet the very same mistake more than half-a-dozen times. I have, therefore, chosen to consider types of errors rather than individual ones; because the former are not only more easily discussed, but are less difficult to eradicate, while the latter demand a special treatment and a consideration of the particular case in which they appear. Particular misspellings of certain words may be an individual failing; but when a large number of students insistently misspell a certain word, no matter whether they have as many orthographies as there are students or a special one, the failing may be considered general. In like manner when pupils persist in misplacing commas, whether each one has a mode of his own or not, I believe the error may be called "common." Some faults, especially those in clearness and distion, do not readily lend themselves to treatment here. I shall, however, point out some sources of these, and show by examples how and where a freshman fails along these lines. Students also show occasional lapses of taste or ignorance concerning some minor points. It is not infrequently the case that a pupil appears, who has no idea of the use of the apostrophe; and the results are often surprising. less strange, but worse in some ways, are violations of good taste in form. But most striking is the fact, that men and women come

to the University without any idea of the use of capital letters. Paragraphing, sentence structure, grammar, spelling, and punctuation are also things about which the freshman has but very crude ideas. It is violations of these principles, then, which I have termed common errors, wherever the mistakes were numerous or of a type. There are, of course, various phases of each topic, but these may be better discussed when the topics are considered fully later in the thesis.

Common grammatical and rhetorical errors, then, will include general violations of principles, not individual mistakes; and these fall into two main divisions--major and minor. They again divide into special groups, which further associate themselves into closely allied classes. Thus under minor errors such mistakes as the misuse of the apostrophe, improper capitalization, and bad form will be discussed. The last of the minor errors is paragraphing, which demands careful attention since it is of large importance from a rhetorical viewpoint although it may not be necessary to the understanding or clearness of a theme. The next four heads, which are the first of the major mistakes are more or less closely associated, for awkward constructions make bad sentences, and bad sentences are often obscure, while, on the other hand, disregard for grammatical relation may cause all these. Diction, which is closely akin to spelling at times, needs careful attention, because it is so largely a matter of individual choice and taste. Spelling, perhaps offers the greatest difficulty since it is unsafe to generalize on small amounts of data. However, a few of the

most commonly violated principles of spelling will be discussed, and an attempt made to classify the words most commonly misspelled. Punctuation is the most difficult matter for a freshman to comprehend, and consequently it offers a wide field of errors. The enumeration of the topics has been made to include all those violations of usage, taste, and rule that are general among freshmen. The subject of the thesis, however, has not been used as a basis for classification; because while it may be possible to say "this is a grammatical and this is a rhetorical error," the two are so closely related and so intimately connected and effect one another so greatly that it is impossible to consider one without the other. For these reasons I have chosen to consider the errors rather in their relations to one another than as separate and entirely unconnected things. Furthermore, as I have already intimated, one mistake is often the cause of others, either directly or indirectly, and, therefore, may be discussed more intelligibly in that relation.

CHAPTER I.

In the group of errors which have just been termed minor are those which in general, have no particular bearing upon the clearness or the understanding of the theme. They are faults and bad ones, too, but they consist in a disregard for usage and formalities rather than in violations of rules. For in certain places the employment or the omission of the apostrophe is not a matter of law in spelling, but a mere convention to distinguish more clearly between two forms. Abbreviations are taboed in formal discourse merely because they appear abrupt and hasty, not because they are wrong in themselves. Likewise capital letters are used in certain places and small letters in others, because common usage has accepted them there. The paragraph, also, is a rhetorical form which has grown up with the development of prose from a rather vague to a clearly defined division of discourse; but it, perhaps, more than the others has a law of thought and reason behind it. The minor errors, then, will appear to be the most difficult to eradicate, in-as-much as they are things which cannot well be reasoned out in many instances, but must depend upon dogmatic assertion for their justification.

One of the most peculiar errors to be pointed out among this group is the misuse of the apostrophe. It seems to be due, not to a lack of knowledge of what an apostrophe is, but to an ignorance of its junction. But there is some danger in making even this statement, for how many of the mistakes in handling the sign

are the result of the real lack of acquaintance with it and its use, and how many to carelessness? are questions which cannot be definitely answered, even if they can be approximately decided. We can say, however, that when a large number of men continually fail to use the apostrophe properly, or employ it in the wrong way, that the error is not entirely a careless one, but is caused in a large measure to an inadequate conception of the sign's function. This may seem improbable, for one would think that in the course of his elementary and high school training the student would acquire by rote the rule, "The apostrophe with s is the sign of the possessive," and yet we find most frequently that a freshman writes "a fielders glove," "last years freshman varsity suit," "ones ^opponent," or "an ^opponents goal." These are a few examples selected at random but they serve to illustrate the point. No one upon thought would parse "fielders," "years", "ones", or "^opponents" as any thing but possessive. Even the freshman would call them that. The difficulty appears, then, to lie not in distinguishing the case, but in giving it the proper sign. The student should know how to do it, but the error occurs over and over again. A yet more curious case is the employment of the apostrophe in the following sentence. "There was only one section reciting on Monday's, Wednesday's and Friday's at ten." There is evidently no demand for the form here, and the reason for its use is not clear. Perhaps having once been corrected for omitting the sign, the student desired not to make the same error again. This over-application is not surprising, for it is no uncommon failing among

freshmen. One other mistake in the use of the apostrophe must also be noted. It, too, depends upon a misconception, and arises from a failure to distinguish forms. Moreover, the confusion is increased, because the omission of the comma in one case is a formality. "Its" and "it's" always puzzles the pupils. If the apostrophe is the sign of the possessive, it should be here the student holds; and firm in his conviction, he writes "it's hat", or "it's way." Perhaps his claim is a charge against the vagaries of our English language, but that is beside the point. Likewise "its" must mean it is, for the pupil seems to know what the two forms are although he turns them around. From this we get "its growing warmer" or "its colder to-night." Clearly the fact that an apostrophe may be used to represent an omitted letter does not occur to him in this case even though he may write "can't," "don't" and haven't." These errors in the use of the apostrophe are almost entirely to a misconception of its function, for after the cases have been pointed out and clearly differentiated, the student errs only when he forgets.

The rules for the use of capitals, while more successfully followed than those concerning the apostrophe, are not always observed. Now and then a freshman fails to use a capital at the beginning of a sentence, but this is due rather to carelessness than to ignorance. Such carelessness, however, is scarcely excusable. A tendency more marked is that to capitalize adjectives of direction, such as eastern, western, northern and southern,

when they are used with nouns, for example, "Eastern Pennsylvania" or "Southern Georgia." The error is not gross, however, and need not be discussed. A mistake similar to this is seen in the capitalization of directions. "He went West." "I am going North this summer." Or better, "It lies to the East of the city." This is largely caused by the fact, that the newspaper sporting pages always use capitals in speaking of the various sections of the country. In the latter case the usage is proper when by East or West we mean a certain part of the nation, but the transfer of it to cases where mere direction is indicated is objectionable. Another case of capitalization which springs from the same source is the employment of the "large letter" in the names of college classes. The papers speak of the "Freshman Football team" or the "Senior Societies", and the pupil promptly spell the names of the classes with capitals. Akin to these errors is the capitalization of such general terms as rhetoric, grammar, high school, and college. When some special course or institution is meant the usage is correct, but otherwise a small letter should be used. Another misuse of the capital, which is somewhat analogous to the last, is that of placing it at the beginning of words like "Shinney", "Hockey", "Football", and the names of other games when those names come in the middle of the sentence. For example, "Shinney is in reality an alteration of the game of Hockey. The difference is that in Shinney you use heavy clubs and swing at the ball, while in Hockey you use lighter clubs and push or shove the ball." Obviously neither of the "Hockeys" needs to be capital-

ized, neither does the second "Shinney." It may be the student thought to make the contrast clearer by the capitalization; but if he did, he has no particular precedent to justify his usage, for neither newspapers or game books emply this form. In general we may say that the error here is caused by the same thing that the mistakes in the use of the apostrophe were due to--an inadequate knowledge of accepted usages.

The one minor error in freshman themes which appears almost unpardonable is the use of abbreviations. This is not bad because they are incorrect, but because such usage is not in good taste. We who are careless of our speech sometimes say, "I'll see you this P. M.", but if we are careful, we write, "I shall see you this afternoon." Likewise etc. is a convenient symbol for a number of things, and is properly used in some places; but a theme or any formal discourse is not a place for it. There is, also, a sign which stands for "and"; but it is no great trouble to write out a word of three letters; and it looks better. Moreover, "Grad" and "P. G." are not to be used in written discourse altho they may be good college slang. Abbreviations in general are to be avoided, yet freshmen insisntently write, "In the city of Bangor, Me.", or "In Frisco, Cal." These errors, altho they are not of great importance, detract much from the impression which a theme should make. The signs are clearly understood and in many cases they may be properly employed; but here it is a matter of culture and taste. Abbreviations are not admitted in formal discourse; and if a pupil insists on using them, nothing but the most careful

training and guidance will overcome the habit.

Practically all the faults I have discussed so far have had to do with formalities. The last of the minor errors is, in certain respects, also a convention; but in paragraphing the idea is clearer and is more thoroughly worked out. Yet every freshman shows a tendency to overparagraph his themes. The trouble arises from a misapplication of what is a truism in rhetoric, namely, every paragraph should contain and develop one idea. The rule is good, but the student's immature mind fails to distinguish between ideas and phases of ideas. To him they are one and the same thing. It was evidently, this misconception which caused the following improper paragraphing.

"But when it is copyed it is not entirely finished for it must be read again and corrected.

When it is finally endorsed the theme is ready to be handed to the instructor." Although the thought does "jump" somewhat between the two sentences, the break is not sufficient to warrant a new paragraph. Perhaps the connection of ideas might have been shown by the use of a transition word, but even its omission does not excuse the ignorance of the pupil in making a new paragraph. The error in the next example is similar. "To do this we must make some study of its peculiarities; we must study Rhetoric.

If Rhetoric taught us no more than merely the correct use of language, it would still be worth while." The ideas here are seemingly less closely connected; but since only an extract from

the theme is given, I shall explain for the sake of clearness that "correct use of language" in the second sentence and "this" in the first refer to one and the same thing. We find a better illustration in the following:

"Rhetoric, says Edward Fulton, "is the art which deals with the effective communication of thought and emotion by means of words."

Very strongly do I emphasize the word 'effective' for that it is which distinguishes rhetoric from dull prosaic grammar. Grammar furnishes the raw material, rhetoric the best means for its use." Clearly there is the closest relation between the two statements, for the pupil is attempting to define rhetoric, and is emphasizing certain details of the quotation. It might never occur to the unpracticed mind that the second sentence is but an explanation of the first. There is Edward Fulton's thought, and there is "my" thought. They are, it is true, two separate things; but they are still intrinsic parts of a whole. This same paper affords an excellent example of the over-paragraphed conclusion. Text books say there should be a closing paragraph to every exposition. This is true; but in a brief, two-page theme broad headings become paragraphs, paragraphs sentences and sentences phrases. The student, however, does not realize this; and laboring under a misconception, he attempts to fulfill the letter of the law, with such results as the following:-

"But the mental development in rhetorical study is of no mean importance. A logical and orderly mind cannot but result

from a conscientious course in the subject. Of necessity, it teaches one to think, for without thought there can be no expression. The debate is an example of one part of rhetoric, which produces new thought and demands logic in its arrangement.

With this idea of mental development we are led back to the first idea for an orderly brain can produce effective communication." The last sentence is, it must be granted, a fitting ending for the theme, but it seems, also, to be a conclusion to the paragraph as well, and as such should be written as a part of it.

In narration, too, the student frequently errs when he attempts to paragraph. Altho divisions are less clearly marked here, it is safe to say that events come in series which bear certain relations to each other, and the individual parts of which are closely connected. The freshman fails to realize this, and to him each separate thing stands out alone and isolated. In the extract given below, the events narrated are those which occurred on the trip to the hunting ground. They are the introduction to the main part of the story, and as such should form one paragraph. They do form three.

"One cold morning in December, I went out in the country to go hunting with a few friends of mine who lived out there. A light snow had fallen during the night, making it a fine day for quail and rabbits.

I reached their house about six o'clock, and they were just hitching up to the bob-sled, so we all climbed in with our guns, and started off. The dogs were running ahead of us in the

brush at the side of the road, feeling in as high spirits as we were.

By seven o'clock we had arrived at a place known as the 'Prairie'. Here there was a great deal of hazel brush and a few cornfields, and it was well known as a good place to hunt." In another extract from the same theme we have the closing events of the day briefly related. It seems that the home-going of the last sentence is but an episode, not a separate event, and consequently it is scarcely worthy of a special paragraph. It is no more distinct from the end of the day's hunting than the fried rabbit feast or the "putting up" of the horses.

"About three o'clock in the afternoon we started back home feeling very much elated over the good success that we had had in our hunt that afternoon. We arrived at my friend's house about half past four, and after putting up the horses, we cleaned up some of the rabbits that we had shot. It was not long before we caught a faint odor of frying rabbit, and one can imagine that it did not take us long to get in the house, for we certainly were hungry. Of course I do not need to say that fried rabbit was soon a scarce article around that house.

'Late that night I started home, with my game bag fairly full and I felt very good, for I had spent a most enjoyable day and evening." The same failure is apparent in the following theme which is given in its entirety. Here there are events or ideas which are in a way separate, but the material is so slight that it affords substance for only one paragraph, which could be

unified by the use of proper transitions and connectives. But even as it is there is a certain progress, and a certain spirit which pervades, or is intended to pervade, the whole--a spirit which finds its first expression in "it just felt so good to get back again", and its last in "it all made me feel so satisfied that I am only too glad to be able to come to Illinois to School."

How the University Seemed to Me when I Returned.

"On returning to the University this fall, after my summer vacation, I could not think that I had been away for over three months. The vacation did not seem so short to me, but it just felt so good to get back again.

'I met many old friends that I knew last year, and saw many familiar faces. Then there were also many new faces, which meant that the University, of which we think so much, is also thought well of in other parts of the country.

'I also liked to get back to work again, and to go around to the different classes, meeting new instructors and getting ready to take up work that I had never had before.

'I also went to Illinois Field and watched the first year men practicing football. A few loyal baseball men were out for fall practice, loosening up a little in early preparation for the games next spring. Then I went to the south campus and watched "Varsity" practice awhile, and to see those fellows working so hard, getting ready to defend "Illinois", was enough to stir up enthusiasm and spirit in every student.

'It all made me feel so satisfied that I am only too glad

to be able to come to Illinois to school."

It seems obvious from the examples which have been cited, that the freshman actually knows what a paragraph is, and that he has a slight idea of its function. The trouble seems to be that he does not know how to make a paragraph, or what to put in it. He has not come to see clearly that it is not a thing of definite length, but a variant whose size depends upon various forces. Furthermore, while he knows it should develop one idea, he does not know just what an idea is. His mind is too immature to grasp the truth that a thought needs expansion and explanation before it is properly understood. Just why this is true it would be difficult to say, but it seems that the pupil has not received a thorough drill in paragraph writing. If he had been made to hand in paragraphs, and not whole themes, until he was fully acquainted with their structure and function, the difficulty would surely be mitigated somewhat. For after a time, the freshmen in general begin to comprehend the system and violations become fewer and fewer. If this can be done in college rhetoric, surely a more prolonged and more concentrated drill in the preparatory schools would be quite as effective if not more so.

CHAPTER II.

I have just finished the discussion of what I have termed the minor errors, and I have classified them as such, not because they are uncommon or unimportant, but because they have to do in most instances with questions of culture and taste; and it is a well known fact that such faults are hardest to overcome. The major errors, on the other hand, are not only those which are more general, but they are those which rhetoric aims to eradicate. A man may not know the finer distinctions concerning the use of capitals and abbreviations; but if he would accomplish much in this world, he must at least be able to write clear and grammatical English. Spelling, punctuation and diction, some may say, are as much matters of culture as any of the minor errors. This is true but they are, also, absolutely necessary to clear and grammatical expressions. It is for this reason that I have chosen to include them in the second class of errors.

The first of the major faults--awkwardness--is due to several causes; it appears in several ways at least. We have constructions where sentences are not sentences; we have places where sentences are not differentiated; we have occasions where the repetition of the word or phrase becomes monotaneous and we have cases of true awkwardness where the trouble lies in the manner of expression. The first of these faults is probably due to a lack of a clear idea of the value of sentences. Very few students can give a definition of one; and very few can distinguish adequately between phrases and clauses, or between principal and

subordinate clauses. Since this is true, it is not surprising that freshmen do not write sentences at times. The trouble seems to lie primarily in the fact, that the pupil does not know that a subject and predicate are usually required in every sentence. Sometimes he may not even know what these terms mean. This will account for such errors, as "Last of all the garrett way upon the top floor." The student has been describing a house; she has progressed logically from basement to attic. The quotation was employed as a transition. Such an expression may not be rhetorically incorrect; but it is grammatically wrong; and the freshman is too immature for such distinctions. They must be one and the same to him; bad rhetoric and bad grammar should be synonymous. The next example is one of relationship rather than transition. "Upstairs are ten rooms. Nine bed rooms and a sitting-room, where we children were sent when mother had company" Here the pupil has not considered the grammatical relation between the two facts. "Nine bedrooms and a sitting-room" is but a further definition of the ten rooms, and as such should be in the same sentence; or if the pupil prefers a separate one, a verb must be introduced into the expression. Akin to this construction, and yet somewhat different, is the use of a subordinate clause as a separate sentence. "Especially when Canada gives nothing to the support of the navy" is an example. Evidently the student did not know the function of a subordinate clause. He has not realized that it is dependent on a main clause for its meaning; he has been told that a verb and a subject are necessary parts of a sentence; he has observed that

they are both present; ergo this is a sentence. The same errors is present here:- "Especially at this critical moment when the memebbers of the gas-house gang are herking at every corner." I should hesitate to say that these mistakes are the result of willfull violations of rules. They appear, rather, because the student does not observe grammatical and thought relations; and he fails in this particular for one of two reasons--either such relations are beyond his comprehension or else they have not been pointed out to him. The latter is probably the case, for most freshmen cease to make these mistakes comparatively early; but in doing so they swing to an opposite extreme in trying to produce long sentences.

This new error is fairly common in freshman themes, and yet it is peculiar. It, too, has for its cause a hazy conception of sentence structure. The student is criticised for using too many short sentences, and is told to combine some of them. Seemingly he does not know conjunctions; and in his attempt he strings together logically separate sentences, and employs commas and semi-colons in place of periods. Do not understand that I object to combining sentences in this way if it is properly done. "He hesitated byt a moment; he pulled off his coat; he sprang into the water" is correct. But "This game does not require much skill, the most important things to be kept in mind, are to make the king row before one's apponent, and to jump as many of his men as possible" is undoubtedly wrong as regards sentence structure. "It is divided into sixty four square colored black and white or any contrasting colors, alternately, each player has a set of

round disco, these also are of contrasting colors." This example presents a new situation. In the first extract the thoughts were related in time. In the second they were connected logically, and the error lay rather in a misuse of the comma than in the union of the sentences, although the advisability of joining two such clauses may be questioned. In the last quotation, however, the two ideas expressed are separate. It is true one follows from the other, but the division of the checker-board and the equipment of the player are not closely related either in thought or time. Therefore each idea should form a separate sentence. The next example not only illustrates the errors of combining logically separate sentences and the improper punctuation of such sentences, but it shows the tendency to unite a number of single expressions into one long one. The fault has been mentioned; and in this case it is clear, for three distinct sentences can be distinguished--the first ending with "register", the second with "Dean", and the third with "Room 306." "There are at least one hundred students in line ahead of you, each one seeking a permit to register, finally you receive the precious document, and are told to go to a certain room where you will find the Dean, after inquiring where University Hall is, you go there, and walk up and down the long corridors, searching for Room 306." Here the difficulty is increased by improper punctuation, but to discuss that would be to digress. It is obvious that the pupil had no idea of the sentence or its uses. When the error consists only in the combination of two or three sentences it is, perhaps, not so bad; but when the

greater portion of a paper is made into one sentence, the crime is unpardonable. The following example which comprises two-thirds of a theme, speaks for itself. "First, there are at least one hundred students in line ahead of you, each one seeking a permit to register, finally, tho you receive the precious document and are told to go to a certain room in University Hall and there you will find the Dean, after inquiring where University Hall is, you go there, and walk up and down long corridors in search of room 306, arriving in time to find that office hours are past, so wearily turning homewards, or rather towards a cheerless room, which for lack of something better one calls home, you sit down and think it over the prospect is not soothing, work commences next day, and nothing done yet. After a night of restless sleep in which you are continually haunted by long waiting lines of people, endless corridors and strong faces, you go forth in the morning again in search of the elusive Dean, wiser now, you wait until his office hours and enter with a feeling that the worst is over, but it isn't, it has just began, you wait and wait, and then it comes your turn to be ushered into the presence only to find that the subject you most desire to take, cannot be taken as you want them so in desperation, the Freshman takes whatever is given him, and starts out on a weary wound to hunt up his different professors most of them he cannot find in the morning so must return in the afternoon, fortunately there is an end to everything so if you have good luck you may find yourself registered at the end of the second day." The causes of awkwardness which we have discussed so far have had to do

with sentence structure entirely, but there is another cause which, in freshman themes at least, is more apparent. It is the repetition of words or phrases which comes from a limited vocabulary. The "dictionary habit" is recommended and preached in high school; but if the case be judged from Rhetoric I themes, few freshmen seem to have acquired it. One would think, however, that the student would observe the effect produced by the constant repetition of words, and would seek for synonyms. But his taste along this line seems to have been neglected, and he appears to be contented with his theme, although one word may be used ten times in as many lines. Whether the fault is wholly due to carelessness or to poverty of diction can be decided only by a study of the individual case; and of course, each case will require a different method of treatment. The error is generally caused by a combination of the two; for even when the pupil knows but a few synonyms, he can vary his diction if he will; but he does not take the necessary pains. To him a horse is a horse; it is never a steed. Baseball is baseball; it is never a game. Variety of expression is often difficult of attainment; but in an example like the following, there is no need of the repetition. "I am going to write about my favorite sport. My favorite sport is baseball. From the first day that I saw a game of baseball played to this present day it has been my favorite sport." A pronoun and the change of a verb or two would work wonders here. Let us see, "I am going to write about my favorite sport, which is baseball. Since the first time that I saw the game played till the present

I have liked it better than any other." The original contains two "baseballs" and three "my favorite sports." I have used each of these words once, and have managed it by combining the first two sentences, dropping a prepositional phrase, substituting a pronoun and adding a new phrase. This sounds formidable, but surely it is not difficult even for a freshman to do. The words repeated in the example given above stand out clearly, because they were the important ones in the sentence; but when conjunctions or pronouns are used too frequently, the effect is not so noticeable, since one loses them in gaining the thought of the sentence. However, repetition may be bad even in such cases. In the illustration the "as's" stand out conspicuously as one reads, although they do not offend the eye. "As you follow the rivalet by way of the winding foot-path you catch glimpses of it now and then through the screen of bushes and trees along its banks as it twists and turns in its rocky bed. 'As you pass along this path--. In the same way the "we's" in the next example become monotonous. At the point where we started the river was wide and smooth, and both sides were covered with small willows which looked like green banks bounding the stream.

Some distance up the stream we could see a ripple or rapids which glistened or sparkled in the sun. We passed the rapids with difficulty, and entered the smooth water above. We were curious what was beyond. As we paddled slowly on, a great heap of logs, stumps, and roots gradually came into view." In The quotation given below "car" is used seven times in the course

of one hundred and seventy-six words, or every eleventh word is "car." Surely some synonym could have been found, or that failing the constructions could have been changed to permit the use of personal pronouns. "When the car is on University Avenue, it is facing east. Upon entering the car take a seat on the south side of the car. The signal is given and the car starts. As it moves along University Avenue, many beautiful houses are passed. This continues for three blocks. The car then turns south upon Wright Street. The first things which attract your attention are the massive green baseball bleachers at the north end of Illinois field. The tall iron fence which surrounds the field is also seen. As the car proceeds, the new Illinois track and the large football bleachers come into view. The armory, with the American flag floating above it can also be seen from the car.

The car has now come to Springfield Avenue. On the north side of this Avenue, the Gymnasium is situated and on the south side are the tennis courts. A carline, leading into Urbana passes between the two tennis courts. To the east of the tennis courts may be seen the woodshop." Sometimes we find a more peculiar kind of repetition, not only is the same word used more than once, but it designates two different things or has two different suggestions. For instance in the following, the connotation of "bank" in the first sense is not the connotation of "bank" in the second sense. "With the bank of foliage on the opposite bank---." The substitution of mass for the first bank would solve the difficulty, and is not hard. It seems that in general the cause of this and

all repetition is a lack of esthetic anger toward the recurrence of words or phrases. Since freshmen, as a rule, are not taking Rhetoric I. because they like to write, but because they must have the credit if they wish to be graduated--since this is so, it is not surprising that they are careless about repeating words. Moreover, psychologists tell us that words once used linger in the fringe of memory, and tend to appear again. This makes the fault a natural one, but I think I am right when I say that even though repetition be a result of psychological laws, it can be counteracted. Words may tend to appear, they may even appear; but if the student is careful, if he takes pains, he can eradicate them from his written work if not from his speech, and we are dealing with the former.

We have so far discussed two phases of awkwardness--improper union of sentences and repetition. We come now to a truer form--awkwardness of expression. It is caused by the fact, that freshmen are not used to expressing their thoughts in writing. They talk, and they have talked; but spoken and written English, unfortunately, differ. Sentences which on paper appear crude might easily pass without comment in conversation. This it is which causes the student to write, "One can not help admiring this comfortable room as a study." Again the pupil often uses the wrong form, or forgetting what he has said shifts to another construction, as "The main thing to do in a basketball game is to be quick and know my own team." The idea which the freshman would convey is clear, but we neither "do" quickness or "Do" the "knowing of our

team." The things we really do are to move around quickly and to "play with" out team-mates. The error here is one of construction. It can be remedied, but not so easily as those in the following examples, for there the awkwardness is caused by the misplacing of a word, and not by any fault or error in construction. "These things aught not so to be." "And altho she is not selfish, she is self centered as far in as her own interests concern others." Shift the "so" around after the "be" and the "in" around in front of the first "so", and the sentences are correct. The difference is not great, yet it is very noticeable as we read. A more unusual combination is found in "Hazing is becoming more and more less extinct each year." The writer evidently did not understand the formation of comparitives; for if he had, the "more and more" would have been dropped. Most of the examples already cited are due to ignorance, but there is another series which is caused by the student's lack of ease in expression. It appears in the peculiar twist given to certain constructions, or better in stilted modes of expression. An illustration is, "Anyone can spend many times a few pleasant hours in this recreation." Although the sentence may be slightly ambiguous, there is no doubt but that the author means that one may frequently spend a few hours in this recreation. His trouble lies first in the selection of a poor phrase, "many times", and second in the placing of that phrase. In this same way passive verbs are often used where active ones should be employed. "The gate, over which is a tall arch, is entered." The sense is clear, the construction is correct, and yet the sentence jars, because we conceive of entering as an action

requiring some imitative. Occasionally the preposition "of" is used in places where it had best be omitted, as "If the things find they have intimidated us, they will not stop, in the hunting down of us, at our thresholds." Sometimes the "of" appears where an adjective had better replace the phrase, as "He surely will be fare in affairs of more results." In the first example the expression becomes less stiff if we change "hunting down" to a gerund and use "us" as object, although even this is not entirely satisfactory. If we make the second one read, "He surely will be fair in more important matters," we express the idea and the sentence is smoother. But these are not the only causes of awkwardness. The attempt to put too much into a single statement is sure to make the sentence awkward. This is the case in, "The small room sonnecting the parlor and hall in one of the flat buildings of Urbana is used as a study by a literary man." The first noticeable thing is the absence of punctuation which might made the relations of the parts clearer. Even then there is too much material for a single sentence. There is need either of the subordination of slauses or of separation into two sentences. The same fault is present in the example. "We can imagine the man leaning back in his chair with his pipe in his mouth, looking at the picutes on the wall over the table or at the bust, when his brain is tired." or again in, "A breeze that was already cooling from the heat of the midday sun, to which it had been subjected, was blowing up from the river." In conclusion it may be said that the freshman is not entirely to blame for his awkward expressions.

He has written but little, and that rather because he had to than because he liked to write. He has had, besides, but little guidance in his composition work. He has come, in many instances from homes where no emphasis was laid on correct expression, and where directness rather than elegance was sought. These things account for most of the errors. Others must be ascribed to that ever-besetting sin, carelessness. The student writes, and stopping forgets what he has written. He begins again, but does not review what he set down before. It may be the two parts go well together, but it is more probable that the result will be incongruity.

Closely allied with these errors of awkwardness are those which lead to obscurity in the meaning of the sentence. In many cases they appear almost identical, indeed clearness is sometimes affected by awkward construction. The difference is, however, that in an awkward expression we can yet see what the student means, while in one which lacks clearness, the ideas is either ambiguous or the thought is entirely obscured. Lack of clearness arises, not only from awkward expression, but also from a confusion of antecedents and pronouns, and examples of this last case are by far the more common. A case in point is, "As one glances up at this extension of the roof, it seems rather dark, just as one would expect from the similarity of the rest of it to a mushroom." It is true that the student had previously compared the entire roof to a mushroom; but the reader, when he first looks at the sentence, refers one "it" to the extension, and in like manner presumes that the second has the same antecedent. After consideration shows

that such is not the case, for the second "it" goes back to the entire roof which was mentioned two sentences above. Another freshman writes, "it is an art to throw a basket from any part of the field I am catch it in." If one is acquainted with the diction of basketball, one will immediately see that the "it" means a ball; but if one does not know the terms of the game, one will make basket the antecedent of the "it." This is merely a case of carelessness in the choice of terms; but it serves to show that clearness is a matter of relativity, and that what may be clear to one person may be most obscure to another. Sometimes the error is caused by the omission of the noun and the insertion of a pronoun, or to the use of a substantive, for example, "The team from each school tries to surpass the other in these games." The pupil has tried to be brief here, but in succeeding has sacrificed clearness, for "other" may refer to either team or school. It probably signifies the former, because what the student meant to say was, "The teams from each school try to surpass those of other institutions in these different games." When a freshman writes, "Constant practice has increased has shown its effect, we can only say that he has been careless. However, such instances as these are rare, but it must not be understood that I mean to say that carelessness does not effect clearness, for in reality it is the great cause of it. I only mean that such gross violations are uncommon. That careless work causes many inaccurate statements to be made becomes evident when we find that the freshman actually knows what he wishes to say, but does not take time to "work out"

the sentence; and it is often the case that the proper expression of an idea requires more time than the creation of the idea.

A fault that seems almost to be one of clearness is the use of pronouns without regard for their antecedents. This is, strictly speaking, a grammatical error, but it oftentimes effects the easy understanding of the sentence, and therefore may be considered here. In each of the illustrations given below the error is evident--a plural pronoun has been used with a singular antecedent or vice versa. While their batting average may not be high for a big league player, it is high for a college player." "The extravagant little town had the audacity to disregard the moon-light and was using their street lamps." "Canada has a great commerce to protect which they think it is their duty to do." This change of persons in pronouns is a frequent but unpardonable error, for the rule, "A pronoun must agree with its antecedent gender and number", is easily remembered and should have been impressed upon the student's mind before he came to college. With this guide in mind the mistake would surely have been obvious if the work had been reviewed or corrected. In like manner, the errors in the following examples is very apparent to any one who reads the sentences closely. One could see their reflection in their polished surface." "Students ought to have the privilege of seeing fire arms, especially when their life has been in imminent danger. "They must have no habits that are injurious to their mind or body." That one person only may possess one separate mind or body, that one thing only may possess one single surface seems

obvious; but many freshmen do not stop to consider either rhetorics or grammatical relations. They express their thoughts in the language of spoken English; and if that be incorrect, their themes are. One other cause for this error is the habit of referring the pronoun, usually a possessive, ahead to the noun it qualifies rather than back to the noun it represents. Just what makes the freshman do this it would be hard to say, but it is probably a case of a misapplication of the rule for the agreement of modifiers.

Several other errors of common speech are reflected in freshman themes, and one of the most common is the change from one person to another. The student in Rhetoric I is no respecter of persons, but shifts from first to second to third and back again easily and innocently. If in one line he uses "you", he writes a "we" in the next without any pangs of conscience. "If one has ever been registered, one will readily recall the experience--you are a Freshman absolutely ignorant of the manner of registration." Here the pupil is addressing some other person; he begins impersonally with "one", but the repetition grows monotonous; and to vary his diction he shifts to a more intimate "you". Perhaps, the matter of persons is not clear to him except in cases of direct address and reference. I think this is the trouble, the "abstract" use of the pronoun has never been clearly explained to him--he labors under a vague conception. Neither do verb relations worry the freshman. To him "we try and made" means the same as "We try to make." He does not see that in the former the attempt succeeds, while in the latter it still a matter of doubt; but he

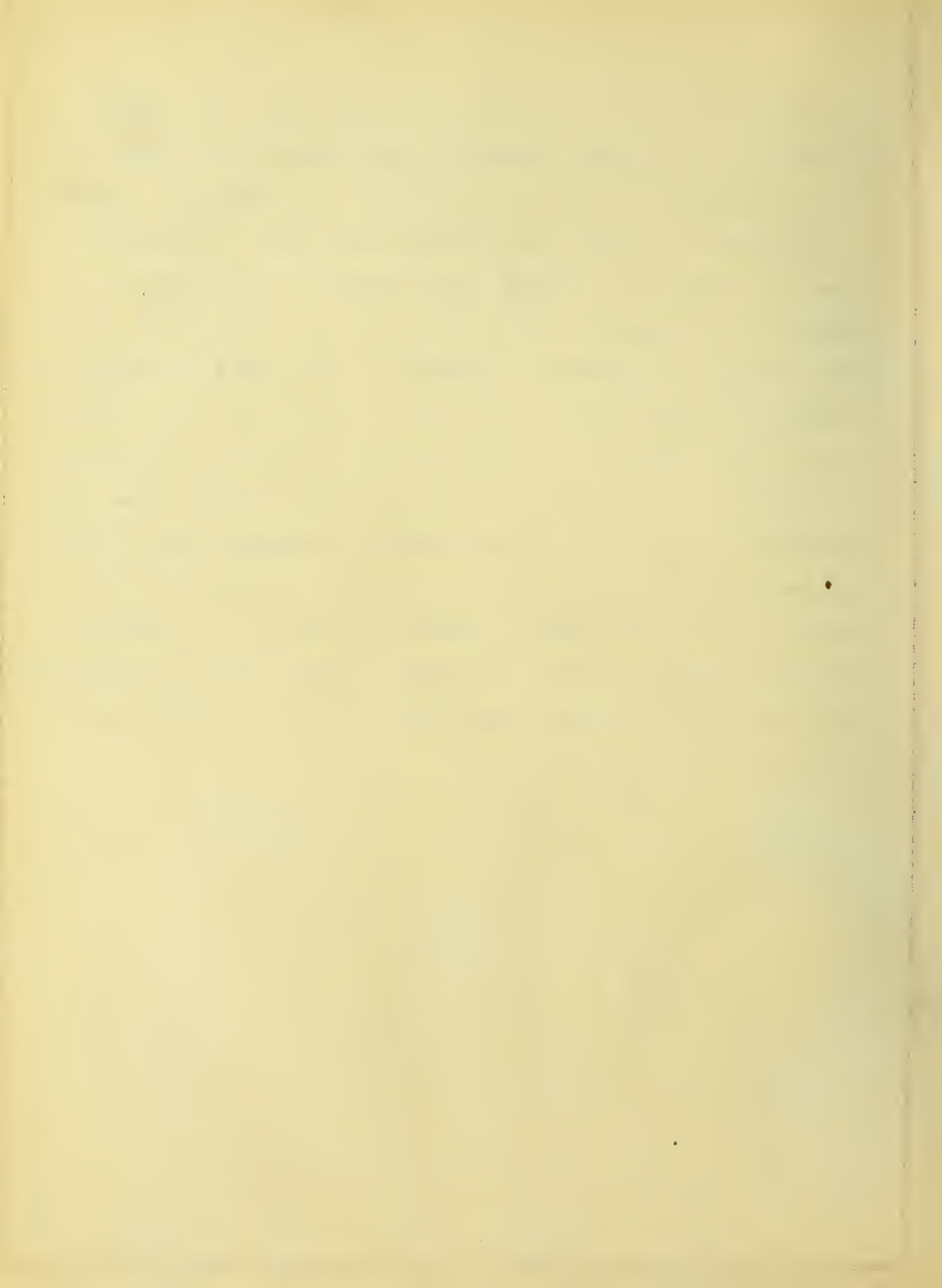
has heard "We try and made" used so often in the sense of the other that the difference in meaning is a revelation to him. "it is interesting to watch the waves striking the beach and dash into foam." Here again verb relations are disregarded, for the student knows little or nothing of even simple parallel construction. When such errors as these occur repeatedly, the inference is that the student is careless, illiterate, or poorly drilled in grammar. For the second there is practically no remedy; for the other two the only care is strict attention to details and hard work.

In the consideration of clearness we saw that frequently it was affected by the non-agreement between the pronoun and antecedent.. This was admitted to be a grammatical error, but more widespread than this is the use of plural subjects with singular verbs, and singular subjects with plural verbs. Any number of examples might be quoted. Here are a few chosen from many. "It is the unexpected and daring throws that makes basket ball so interesting." "Back of the cases ran the shelving and this held an assortment of articles which were quite in keeping with the things in the show cases." "The entire building is made of hewn stone, which are now gradually crumbling away." "While at the north are one of the main attractions of this city park, the collection of animals." In none of these is there any doubt as to the real subject. "Throws" is plural, "that" refers to "throws" and is subject of makes which is singular. No grammatical relation could be clearer unless it be that in the third illustration.

"Hewn stone" must be the antecedent of "which", and is singular. In the last quotation the student should have seen that "one" was the subject, for "main attractions" is object of the preposition. Moreover he puts collection of animals in opposition with "one", and he is talking about it in particular. These are cases of either carelessness or of plain ignorance, and either one in a college freshman is to be condemned. In the following sentences the error is similar; but it arises from the fact, that the pupil evidently was not acquainted with collective nouns. "Beneath one (a lamp) a crowd of happy children were dancing." "This quartet of men have been working fine." The predicates are plural although both "crowd" and "quartet" as collective nouns require singular verbs. The student has looked at his last noun, seen it was plural, and selected his very accordingly. Perhaps, he does not know how to distinguish such a noun, but even then the source of the trouble is the same. Grammar has either been slighted as a study, once taught the precept has not been applied, or the pupil has never been trained to use his knowledgd except in constructing examples for grammar "quizzers." The error is plainly the result of a long vacation from principles, perhaps a four year high school course with no emphasis on grammar; for the freshman can seldom form an adequate definition of a simple grammatical term; and when conceptions are vague and indistinct, proper usage cannot exist.

The value of grammar cannot be too highly estimated, for it plays an important part in all theme-writing, especially in

the matter of sentence structure as we have seen. For although the first set of awkward expressions was caused by the student's lack of knowledge of what a sentence was, and although the second was the result of repetition, clearness was found to be largely a matter of grammatical relation, particularly as regards the pronoun and its antecedent. The errors of common speech were, also, almost entirely violations of grammatical principles as was the case of subjects and predicates. If, then, the expression of a thought is so closely related to the application of the rules of grammar, I think that it is only fair to insist that the freshman have some knowledge of them. It is freely granted that many of the mistakes discussed were the result of carelessness on the part of the student; but when he shows a remarkable ignorance, not only in the application of the principles, but of the principles themselves, surely his offences against good English are not entirely due to carelessness.



CHAPTER III.

When we attempt to discuss diction, we have a more difficult task before us than we had when we considered awkwardness, sentence structure, or clearness; for while it was possible to say that such a thing was wrong and such a thing right in the latter cases, it is manifestly impossible to find an adequate standard in the case of diction. In matters of mechanical form we have certain fairly definite rules by which we may judge the merits of the situation; but diction is too vague a term to be treated thus. When the word is mentioned, we call to mind the Quincey and Stevenson, or we think of suggestion and connotation. However, the freshman, when he first comes to college, does not realize the force of words. Unless his home education has taught him, or a fairly wide acquaintance with literature has led him to have a feeling for meanings, he has none. Since this is so, the instructor in Rhetoric I can scarcely hope to insist on picturesque diction. It is immaterial in the beginning whether the student talks of brown or russet oak leaves, of yellow or golden sunsets. The emphasis should rather be placed upon the correct use of certain common words which in the freshman's mind are associated with others that have similar sounds but different meanings.

At first thought such a statement may seem strange; but when we see how persistently the pupils are in this one line, the matter appears more serious. Pretend looks somewhat like contend, and repose somewhat like depose; but they are not at all alike in

denotation; and because this is so, the freshman makes some peculiar errors. Not infrequently in argumentative themes, the statement, "the affirmative retains" appears. Evidently the writer means "maintains", but the words are not clearly differentiated in his mind. When a girl writes, "Here she can throw off all constraint", she clearly means "restraint", although "constraint" expresses something near to her idea. Occasionally, however, the error does not lie in the failure to distinguish prefixes. It is a clear misconception of the word itself. In, "There is a thrilling love strain thru the whole which bends to the drastic description", the student intended to say, or at least meant, "dramatic", but the similarity in the sounds of the words led him astray. There is, likewise, no good excuse for saying "she always has a large circle of friends for she is entertaining, witty, talented in music and realistic." For although "realistic" means "true to life", and hence "natural", the definition is no warrant for this usage. Not so forfeited and yet of similar sort, is the misuse of "luxuriant" in the following.- "The children were heirs to much wealth, and were surrounded with everything luxuriant." These errors are, I must grant, limited to a certain class of students, namely those whose environments in home and school have not been such as to give them fairly large vocabularies. Yet it seems true, if a judgment be formed from freshman themes, that freshmen do not, as a rule, distinguish clearly between words, especially those which sound slightly alike. This may be due to the fact, that they have not been taught to

look up meanings in the dictionary; or it may be due to the fact, that the pupils seldom associate the spoken sound with the written form. Either one of these would cause the mistakes cited in this paragraph; for if the student does not know the exact meaning of a word, he is not likely to use it correctly, nor is he absolutely sure of his ground if he has not clearly connected the spoken word and the written symbol, in-as-much-as sounds are deceptive and the ear unreliable. These same reasons will probably serve to explain some error which are rather uncommon, but which because of their peculiarity deserve some mention here. One student writes, "You always look over my faults." This might mean that "you" were superficial, but the pupil surely meant that "you" were charitable. "if we are apposed to it, let us think twice and change our point of observation." Observe and view are almost synonymous, yet "point of view" is a rhetorical term, and "point of observation" has not been sanctioned as a variant. "He was an agricultrualist" conveys the idea, but former is just as dignified and is, above all, single English. Webster does define incorporate as mix, but this use of the word in this sense is so unusual as to make a statement like the following appear almost humorous:- "These ingredients are thoroly incorporated." These mistakes are undoubtedly caused by attempts to vary the diction, and by a superficial acquaintance with words themselves. The first is laudable as a trial, no matter how bad the failure, but the latter is really unpardonable, for the student should at least be acquainted with the fundamental meanings of such common words.

Another offence in diction is the use of slang. This is a matter of taste; and its causes are, therefore, not easily determined. The student, as a rule, employs such questionable phrases only because he does not know how to distinguish between them and good English, or at best between acceptable and objectionable slang. If he does recognize the difference, he still feels that it is clever or "smart" to use these expressions. Moreover he hears slang in the home and at the theatre, he reads it in books and in the newspapers. The result is that as a premium is often placed upon it in these places, he comes to incorporate it in his own speech and finally into his writing. However, slang does not appear very often, and then usually in themes on sports. Only one instance where the taste was shockingly bad appeared in an artistic piece of work. The student had prepared a rather good theme on "Morning on a Farm", but he ended with, "Farm life is certainly glorious with all its nature scenes, but OH! you cold!" No ending could have dropped farther. The whole effect of two pages of good description was destroyed in one sentence. But the grossest errors occur in themes about baseball. The student reads the "Sporting page" of the newspapers if he reads nothing else; and any one who has the baseball reports in the Chicago Tribune or the Record Herald cannot have failed to notice the atrocious English. It is true that the freshman gets his baseball vocabulary. One team may be an excellent one, but the fact can be told without calling it a "nifty bunch". It may, also play very good ball, but it must not "display someclass."

Neither is it an "aggregation of pill tossers", except in newspapers. It may win all its games but the enthusiastic freshman need not record the victories by saying "We took them into camp", The diction of a theme may be varied in ways other than calling Chicago's squad the "Midwayites" or "Stagg's collection of ball tossers." The pitcher may throw the ball over the catcher's head, but he must not "heave it steen feet." The batter may knock a home run, but he never "soaked the leather for four bags." I have quoted a few of the common expressions but there are many more. All of them, however, are due to the same cause. The Freshman sees them in the paper and puts them in his theme. As we said at the beginning, the use of slang is a matter of taste, and if the student of himself does not feel any resentment of the appearance of such terms in formal discourse then the case is indeed sad--and almost hopeless. The fault is not limited to freshman; it appears in conversation, especially at College, and in much cheap literature. A peculiar American carelessness and independence has made us try to break away from conventionalities, and in our English the results have been wonderful.

Although diction has been said to be largely a matter of taste, spelling bears a certain relation to it, especially as it regards the association of spoken and written words; for it was pointed out that many errors there were due to the lack of relation in the student's mind between the oricular and visual symbols. There is a certain class of misspelling which I believe are caused by this. Here a vowel is either sherred over or dropped, or it

may be the vowel combinations have different sounds, as in read and read. In a number of words picked out of various freshman themes, there are the following misspellings:-

sc ^w nds	celler
signiture	Grammer
disterbance	magnifisintly
servent	galuped
preperation	redish (radish)
barrackcaded	

It is safe to say that in nine cases out of ten these words are pronounced as they are spelled here. The most common error appears to be the change of an a to an e, a frequent mistake in emunciation and one made by many people. The shift from an a to an i in signature also follows after the ordinary pronunciation of the syllable. In galloped and barricaded the trouble lay, not only in the peculiar pronunciation of the words, but in the students ignorance of the proper form as well. Two other words in the list shoares and "streaches" might belong to this first class; and yet the mistakes here are hardly due to pronunciation; it seems rather to be caused by pure lack of knowledge, although there is a certain similarity in sound between a simple o and an oa. Three words in the list show more plainly still the danger of associating spellings with pronunciation. When a student writes, "counterpained", "sea-fairing", or compleated", he shows that he is not well acquainted with the particular word, and also that he connects it with a form of similar sound but different meaning.

The error arises, because the pupil has not had any thorough drill which has cleared up distinctions between the various homonyms, with which English teems. No person who has had the differences between to-too, and two explained will persistently violate the rule by using them interchangeably. He may misuse them, but he will not shift them around; and this is just what the freshman does, and he does it for the reason, that he is not aware that spelling makes any difference.

There are one or two other classes of words with which the student has difficulty, and it is to be that the trouble is caused by imperfect drill during his preparatory training. The ones which he most insistently misspells are those containing double consonants. In a series of eighty-three papers symmetrical was improperly spelled thirty-one times; recommendation, twenty-nine times; occurrence, fifty-three times; and accommodate, thirty-nine times. None of these are unusual words; they should all be in every freshman's vocabulary, yet almost fifty per cent of the pupils included in the test "missed" them. This seems to be the result of only one thing--the principles of the doubled consonate have not been thoroughly impressed on the students minds. This seems all the more likely to be the case when we find professor and parallel correctly spelled, although they are rather less common in ordinary English. It may be remarked here that the high percentage of misspellings in occurrence was due in part to a failure to distinguish between the -ence and the -ance ending, a mistake very common among freshmen. Among the other frequent errors in

orthography may be noted a tendency to invert the -ai in -aim endings. Villain was misspelled forty-one times, and almost invariably "villian." Just why this should be at is difficult to say, for there are few, of any, words ending with -can. The mistakes doubtless a result of the student's lack of acquaintance with the word itself, and also to his ignorance of the principle of orthography involved. Furthermore, freshmen do not seem to know of a surety what words retain the final -e before suffixes, and what ones drop it. This is especially true where -able is added. In eighty-three papers noticeable was misspelled twenty-six times; lovable, twelve. From this it is evident that most people drop final -e's in attaching suffixes. It is, of course, difficult to state a fixed rule; but it seems only right and proper that the freshman should be acquainted with such simple and ordinary words as noticeable and loveable. These errors appear all the more curious when we know that the supposed "catch" words, such as separate, all right, principal, and principle, fail to "catch." There seems to be only one possible explanation, and it is, that the students have been so carefully drilled upon them that they cannot forget them. If, then, such results can be accomplished with these words, it might be well to attack the other troublesome ones in like manner; for I believe the whole matter of misspellings is caused by inadequate training in the preparatory schools.

I cannot pretend that this is an absolutely exhaustive discussion of the matter of misspelled words in freshman themes, for in the first place it is difficult to determine just how well

a student can spell, because he may have acquired the excellent habit of consulting a dictionary. In the second place the pupil usually fails where one least expects him to, that is, he spells long or unusual words correctly, because he looks them up, and common ones incorrectly, because he relies on his memory, or will not admit that he does not know them. This probably accounts for such errors as "ez" (is), or "descided" (decided), or "buisy" (busy). Mistakes like these point to one of two things--either the pupil is illiterate or improperly trained. It is granted that for most people spelling is a laborious achievement of many years, but it seems only reasonable that twelve years of training should impress upon the mind some of the principles of orthography. From the observation of freshman themes, however, one might say that the emphasis has fallen on one or two stock words (separate, believe, receive, and principle) to the exclusion of all others, with the result that the pupil glibly recites these few, but becomes hopelessly rutangled in the mazes of doubled consonants and unusual vowel combinations.

CHAPTER IV.

In punctuation we have a topic fully so delicate as any we have so far discussed, for paragraphing can be more or less definitely determined, words have commonly accredited meanings, and spelling are fairly uniform, but there have been many styles of punctuation, and there are many. For even to-day it is, in part at least, a matter of individual taste; and although some rhetorics make dogmatic assertions, no set rules can be laid down. Whether the simple parts of a compound sentence shall be separated by a comma or a semi-colon is a matter open to debate. Whether semi-colons or commas shall be used between a series of simple clauses depends in a measure upon the writer's preference and somewhat on circumstances. There are, however, certain accepted rules which may form a common ground. An appositive should be set off by commas, as should a subordinate clause at the beginning of a sentence, and a semi-colon should separate the complex parts of a compound statement. These are generally accepted rules, and ones usually followed; and as such they form a working basis. For I have chosen not to consider the colon since it is so infrequently used; nor shall I discuss the period and interrogation mark, for these uses are too clear to need comment, and their misuses are the result of carelessness, rather than of ignorance.

The misuses of the comma, which, as the simplest mark of punctuation, we shall consider first, are two--its omission where it should be employed, and its insertion where it should be

left out. In the first class one of the most common errors is the omission of the comma either before or after an appositive phrase. The mistake cannot, surely, be due entirely to ignorance of what such a phrase is, for the student usually puts a comma either before or after, though seldom in both places, as:- "This statue of one of our martyred presidents, Abraham Lincoln impresses you." However, it would seem that the necessity of the second comma is either not realized or known, for "The maiden, Dorothy makes her appearance" shows the same error. The most feasible explanation is that the student has been careless; for in placing a comma before the appositive, he showed that he recognized, in part, its relation to the sentence. Furthermore, this construction is a common one, and must have been met many times before; and ignorance of it can, therefore, scarcely be a legitimate plea. In a case like the following:- "The beating, or kneading is important", the conception may easily be a fault. Verbs in apposition are rather infrequent, and the pupil has used the comma here simply because he wished to separate two verbs. The trouble arises in these cases only because the student has not realized the necessity for full punctuation, or because he was ignorant of proper usage. Just what was the cause in each case it would be impossible to say, but it is safe to assert that here, as elsewhere, the freshman has no real conception of proper punctuation, its necessity and its function.

Not entirely different from these errors is the failure to employ commas after subordinate clauses which stand at the be-

ginnings of sentences. General acceptance has sanctioned such usate, and I think I am safe in saying that the amission of the comma here is an error. Any number of examples might be cited, but I have selected only a few which illustrate the point most clearly. "As we look into it from the parlor the first thing which attracts our attention is a bust of Shakespeare." "Penn usually is able to get a large number of strike outs, and if his arm which is now in bad condition gets better soon our prospects will look as rosy as ever." "When the entire outline has been composed and the theme carefully read and corrected it is ready for the final copying." "Soon we came to a village, and as we passed thru its silent streets we peeped thru the dry leaves of the porch vines." In all of these the mistake is the same--an if, when, or as clause begins the sentence which runs on without punctuation. The student seems to err here, becuae he is ignorant of the usage; for no sooner has the error been pointed out than he sways to an opposite extreme, and places a comma before all subordinate clauses which come at the ends of his sentences. This assertion seems to be supported by the fact, that students occasionally use dependent clauses as sentences, not recognizing them as intrinsic parts of a sentence, but conceiving them as complete in themselves. Both errors arise, doubtless, from an inadequate conception of such clauses, for both of them are more or less fully corrected during the year in Rhetoric I.

Not very different from this last offence is the failure to employ punctuation before a causal clause. This must be due to

ignorance of the convention, for it is not difficult to distinguish such a clause from others. Yet, so far as the comma is concerned, the student seldom does, and the ovrst mistake he makes when he has learned is to over-apply the rule, and to classify prepositional phrases introduced by "for" and "because of" as causal clauses. "To tell of the difficulties of the first day at college is far different from the experience because one cannot tell of the unappreciative looks cast upon the Freshman by the upperclassmen", a comma should be used, if only to retieve a long sentence again this statement, "They have to be on the passive side for they do everything possible to get out of it", the second part is obviously a reason for the first even though it be a poor one, and as such it should be set off by a comma. But we have made too much of little here.

Another, though minor, error is the failure to set off by commas transitional words which have no real use in the sentence as far as sense is concerned, but which merely serve to prevent jerkiness, or to increase smoothness. In "Then they come here wearing emblems from their respective schools", the "then" is used to show that a new division of the subject is being taken up. It warns us. We are not interested in it, we want to see what follows. Consequently, a comma marking a pause after the "then" would indicate the relation between it and the rest of the sentence. The same thing is true in the next case, "There are two sides to the question however." This violates the rhetorical principle of emphasis. We must not only know that "however" is only a transit-

ional word, we must be clearly shown that it is, and the only way to do this is to use a comma. These errors are mere mechanical ones. There are rules for guidance in such cases; and the matter, then, becomes not a question of taste but of familiarity with routine punctuation; and unfamiliarity can only come from a lack of proper drill during the period of preparation.

Where one attempt to discuss the over-use of commas, one immediately becomes involved in difficulties. This authority says the parts of a compound predicate should be separated by a comma; that one says they should not; a third compromises, saying that when a number of words intervene between the two verbs, a comma should be used, otherwise it should not. The last belief, whatever claims the others may have, is the most satisfactory, although it is the least clearly defined. It appears to be an error to write, "He came, and talked to me", just as it seems incorrect to say, "He rushed down to the rotten pier to which the leaky boats were tied and casting one off rowed prantically toward the sinking man." There is, also, a peculiar tendency to separate adjectives by commas although they are cnnected by and, as, "It was light, and sunshining in all the rooms." There is no need of punctuation here, for only word are used; if, however, phrases were substituted for the adjective a comma might be employed to advantage. Furthermore, the freshman shows an inability to distinguish between such constructions as, "one dard red cow" and "a small, wrinkled old man." In each of these he would probably place a comma after each adjective; becuause he is not able to see, or at least does not

figure out, the relation of adjective to adjective, or adjective to noun. In the first example it is evident that "one" modifies "dark red cow", and that "dark" modifies "red", not "cow". Likewise in the second case small and "wrinkled" describe "ond man." Perhaps, the best solution of the problem is to say that where "and" might be used a comma should be placed. These errors are minor ones and result chiefly from the student's ignorance of certain conventionalities of punctuation; and while they may not be errious, to make them is none-the-less a fault.

The pupil also finds considerable difficulty in punctuating sentences which contain relative clauses. Shall he write "The man who entered the room greeted me cordially", or "The man, who entered the room, greated me cordially?" Shall he say, "In this case, which is an exceptional one, the error is bad", or "in this case which is an exceptional one the error is bad?" It is obvious that the two cases are different, in the first the relative is an intrinsic part of the subject, in the second it is an appositive, so to speak. There is a general rule to govern punctuation in these cases; but the trouble lies in its application, for the question always arises is the clause necessary or unnecessary to the meaning. It is often difficult to say, and the freshman very frequently cannot say. The only feasible plan seems to be to let him find out for himself by a process of trial and error, for lectures and laws are not effective in such cases.

Likewise, we may say, as we did in the case of compound predicates, that there are no adequate rules governing the use of

the comma between subjects and predicates. Common usage has consented to its use after a long subject, especially one with several modifiers, but the freshman assumes a licence here and separates all subjects from their predicates. In the sentence, "There, are large tracts of woodland", the "there" is not meant to be an emphatic designation; it is the common use of there are. But more to the point is, "these men, forget the extra expense", or again, "Everything, was spotless." The subjects and predicates in these sentences are not far removed from one another, and there is no danger of losing the verb among the modifiers of the noun. The student has failed to fully realize the grammatical relation, with the result that he has violated the grammatical unity of the sentence. The same thing is true of the next example, "The line-up for the season, has practically, been selected." This error might, at first sight, pass for one due to carelessness, but when it occurs in various ways, the situation becomes more serious. "It was the first opportunity I had, to admire the scenery" shows the same kind of mistake. In both cases the verb has been cut in two, or closely connected part set off by a comma. There is neither vocal or sense pause at either place, which could justify the use of any punctuation. It is a clear violation of relationships. An offence similar to these last two, is the placing of a comma after the "to" of an infinitive, as:- "If a guard is good enough she will not let me have a chance to throw at the basket." Of phrases are frequently used as possessives, and so much are closely related to their nouns. The barest facts of grammar should make this

plain, but the pupil frequently writes:- "The neatness, of everything impressed me." or, "It was about six-thirty in the evening, of a hot August day." In neither case is the prepositional phrase separated from the noun it modifies; in neither case is there danger of ambiguity; and the error, therefore, becomes a violation of the law, neither to be excused or condemed. The most peculiar mistake, however, is that of separating subordinate conjunctions from the clauses which they introduce. When the pupil wrote, "altho, Japan has not half the commerce, they possess one of the strongest navies in the world." he was probably misled by an erroneous voice inflection; but if he had looked at his sentence, he must have seen that the punctuation put the "altho" with the clause, "They possess one of the strongest navies in the world", while in reality it belongs with "Japan has not half the commerce." Similar to this is, "For, four consecutive nights students were way-layed." Here the attempt was made to remedy the awkward repetition of sound, but in the trail structure was disregarded. Practically every one of these errors is the result of carelessness; for if the student stopped to consider the effect of inserting commas in such places, he could not fail to see that grammatical relations were violated.

So far the errors considered have been those of overuse. Of the under-use there is little to say, because the freshman is more likely to use too many marks of punctuation rather than too few. The latter fault, when it appears, generally comes in a failure to divide long sentences properly, and here it is caused,

not so much by a lack of knowledge as by an unfamiliarity with the constructions involved. Students usually write short sentences when they begin Rhetoric I; and the attempts to combine them into longer statements result, not only in vague and awkward sentences as I have already pointed out, but also in bad punctuation. One extract will illustrate my point. "If these things are not at hand the writer might waver in his good intent and, once having started and failed in the writing of a theme, it is very likely that particular theme will not be written." The sentence is compound, but each part is also complex. While the second part is punctuated correctly, the first is not. Moreover, the transition from division to division is unmarked by either comma or semi-colon. This is due, doubtless, to the student's unfamiliarity with involved sentence structure; and this fault only constant practice will overcome.

The student appears to have less idea of the use of the semi-colon than he has of that of the comma. This is only natural for the latter is a far more common mark of punctuation than the former, and consequently is met with more frequently. In many instance, too, the rules for the use of the semi-colon are more vague than those for the placing of commas; but even this fact will not warrant the substitution of the first for the second, or its omission where its use should be obvious. Whether the semi-colon need be used between the parts of all compound sentences is a mooted question, and has but little bearing on this topic. Such a sentence as, "The purpose of this argument is not to pronounce

the mono-rail perfect; but it is simply to enumerate those points which argue strongly for the system", is right or wrong according to the individual new point. But a semi-colon is really necessary in, "He rose as I entered extending his hand and as I took it there was something in the hearty grasp that made me feel at home." For here we have commas employed in both clauses, and a stronger mark is needed to show the division of the parts. In the next example also, the free use of commas makes a semi-colon advisable after space." "There were pictures of girls, that occupied about 5 sq. feet of space and the rest of the space was covered with posters, announcements, dance programs, penants and all kinds of tricks." Not all misuses of the semi-colon, however, have to do with its omission. It, like the comma, is often inserted where it does not belong. In the following the pendulum has swung too far toward usage, with a most peculiar result. "He was neatly; but commonly dressed. His was a kind; but stern face." The contrast here is very intimate; but as the sentences stand, the gulf appears too wide. A comma alone would have been sufficient to indicate the vocal inflection desired. "It seems to me that you ought to be interested enough to make this trip, and see what conditions I am living under; and why they agree with me so thoroughly." In this case the student has been led astray by the instructions to put semi-colons between the complex parts of a compound sentence. He has not stopped to consider that the what and why clauses are co-ordinate, and that is why he made the mistake. Neither has he observed that they are both objects of "see", and

consequently very closely related. Rather closely connected with these misuses is that of employing the semi-colon to set off relative clauses. It is true that in the following example the clause has several commas, but since common usage has not accepted the semi-colon as a proper mark of punctuation in such cases, its insertion is an error. "It was a man; who stood there in the pride of his strength, tall, straight, and strong." The same is true of the next illustration, where the subordinate clause is set off by a semi-colon--the main part of the sentence has several commas, but usage has not sanctioned this use of the semi-colon. "If an unsatisfactory answer was given; the bunch would be on one or two students who could not defend themselves against so many." In these two statements just quoted the error was caused by a misapplication of a rule. At times, however, the mistake is due only to ignorance or wilfull carelessness. When a pupil writes, "It comes as regular; as the oscillations of a pendulum", his error becomes a gross violation. The cannection between the parts is extremely close, for the second as is not separate, but is an intimate part of the expression "as regular as." Not so very different from these misuses is the employment of a semi-colon before a participial phrase, as in, "We all understand its cimplicity; being nothing but an immense revolving wheel." Irregardless of other faults in the sentence, the "being" phrase is an explanatory one. It is something like an appositive, and a comma would be sufficient punctuation. Occasionally the freshman uses

marks without regard to their value. When an appositive or a transition word is set off, punctuation signs of equal value (usually commas) are employed; but in, "There is one place, however; which it pays to visit", the "However" is separated from the rest of the sentence by two symbols of unequal value--a violation of uniformity in punctuation.

In the discussion thus far it has been pointed out that many of the errors in punctuation were due to lack of drill in, and to misapplications of principles. This is all true enough, but there is yet another cause of errors. In the case of misspelled words, I said that freshmen made no real connection between spoken and written words. The same thing seems to be true here in the case of punctuation. Voice inflection and punctuation marks are in no wise related in the student's mind. If he could be brought to realize that certain signs on a page mean certain modulations of the voice, then, I feel confident, much of the trouble in punctuation would disappear. Whether the discontinuation of reading after the eight grade has any direct bearing on the matter, I cannot say; but it is probably true that the average high school student does not read fifty pages aloud for real expression during his four years course. In his theme work he punctuates by rule; and he who is guided by law alone falls into many pits. So it is with the freshman. He may know a lot of rules on punctuation, he may know them by rote; but as long as he forms no connection between punctuation marks and voice inflection, just so long will he make mistakes in placing his commas and his semi-colons.

CONCLUSION

With punctuation I closed the discussion of the points I aimed to consider. It is true these were largely errors in technique, in mechanical form. They had to do only with correct expression and not directly with emphatic or eloquent writing, although they naturally effect these latter types, because no essay can be either forceful or graceful if it contains misspelled words and ungrammatical sentences. The finer points of style--vividness, vitality, parallel and balanced structure--have not been discussed; because, as a rule, the freshman is not mature enough to have a style, has not talent enough as yet to be vivid, has not seen enough of life to have vital ideas, and is too busily employed writing correct sentences to think of balanced or parallel structure, even if he knows what it is. I do not mean to say, however, that these points should not be brought out in Rhetoric I; but I still insist that as long as the pupil shows vital weakness in the fundamental requirements of punctuation and grammar, the emphasis should be placed here rather than on some finer point of style.

If, then, the stress is to be laid upon minor perfections, the question might be asked, Where shall it fall? It is difficult to answer, for it is almost impossible to say which of these minor errors is most important, they all appear so bad. It would seem, however, that such things as sentence structure and with it, of course, punctuation and clearness should be treated first; for upon these things composition rests. They are the fundamentals

and without them correct spelling and perfect diction both lose their force. It was pointed out that in these cases, most of all, the conceptions of the student were not clear. He seemed to have no idea of sentence or clause value, and above all of grammatical retation; and it was the lack of the latter one which appeared to cause the trouble. However, punctuation must also be admitted to have played a part in poor sentence structure, since at times the misplacing of commas or semi-colons destroyed or partially lied the meaning. But the greatest trouble lay in the students rather meager knowledge of grammar and its rules, without which he cannot hope to master the English language to any appreciable extent. In care of punctuation the situation was practially the same--the pupil had no general conception of the art. He seemingly scatters his punctuation mark better--skelter, partly because he attempts to follow rules and misapplies them, as in the case of causal clauses and prepositional phrases. If, then, the application of principle as principle fails, the only thing possinle seems to me to be what I suggested, a correlation between vocal and written expression, a connection between voice modulation and punctuation. The methods of procedure are different in the two cases, it must be admitted in one the facts must be drilled in, the subject attacked directly; in the other while stress is to be laid on rules, a greater emphasis is placed upon indirect mastery.

In spelling and diction also the greater number of errors seemed to some from an ignorance of forms. When a student uses two

words of comparatively similar sound interchangeably and consequently incorrectly, it may be assumed that he does not know those words. If he spells somewhat phonetically but yet improperly, it is safe to assume that he not acquainted with the words. This seems, in a large measure, to be the trouble with every freshman--he has but a very limited vocabulary, and often times that is not fully mastered. He may be acquainted with the individual words, he may be able to pronounce them when he sees them, but he can neither use them correctly in sentences, or spell them without error. One hears much about the "dictionary habit" in high school, but it would seem to be a chimera if one is to judge from freshman themes. However, the last assertion does not apply in full to the case of spelling, for while the pupil will depend on his memory or his sense for the orthography of short and common words, he looks up all the long or unusual ones in Webster's or the Century. Yet the fact remains that the pupil exhibits a remarkable ignorance of certain rules of spelling. It was pointed out that doubled consonants and similar vowel sounds gave him the greatest trouble. Since spelling is an art mastered, in most instances, only after continued and strenuous effort, I should say that great emphasis should be placed upon a mastery of such forms. Some of them have been acquired by rote, as believe, receive, and separate, but the application has not been carried over to other forms, and the achievement has stopped with these. From this it would appear that what the student needs is, not only a thorough drill on spellings, but also on extended course in definitions,

which shall teach him the meanings of many common words, and shall make him use the dictionary and synonym-book.

The things I have discussed thus far have been matters of technique, but composition always has, and will be, a matter of taste, and convention to a certain extent. I pointed out several minor errors which seemed to violate our ideas of these things, for it seems certain that formal discourse must lose in its effect if the writer misplaces apostrophes, or if he use capitals improperly, or if he employs abbreviations. These things are, perhaps, merely arbitrary; but it is a good rule to do as the Romans do in Rome, unless you are a genius--and geniuses among freshmen are very rare. The pupil ought to know these minor points from his high school training; but whether it has made no attempt to impress them on his mind, or whether he has forgot them, it is impossible to say. In the matter of taste, however, the student shows shocking lapses. I have pointed out that the most flagrant violation came under the head of diction in the use of slang. This corruption, this disease, has crept into every place almost where once pure English held sway. We, as a nation, have come to feel that slang is absolutely necessary to forceful and clear expression. Home, stage, pulpit, and college are all guilty of its use. Conversation teems with it. There is small wonder, then, that the pupil fails to realize the enormity of his crime when he uses it. But it is easier to point out the errors here than to give a remedy. It seems that the only way is to insist strenuously that such forms be replaced by accepted ones, and to

insist thus until the pupil of himself realizes the difference and sees the advantage of the more refined usage.

Unlike the last points I have discussed, paragraphing is not a matter of taste, but of rule, and the rule is so clear that there should be little difficulty in applying it; and yet freshmen do not, as a rule, know how to paragraph. Nothing, seemingly could be clearer than the statement, that a paragraph should contain and develop one idea; but as I pointed out in the discussion of the topic, the student does not seem to know just what an idea is. Thought and idea appear to be synonymous to him, and since a sentence expresses a complete thought, it should be a paragraph. There is, however, more to an idea than one single thought. It is a series of them starting from one local point, spreading out, and focusing again. If the pupil could be made to realize this, surely the sentence paragraph would disappear, for it undoubtedly seems from a misconception of what a real paragraph is.

Some one will probably insist that the high school student is taught all these things. I do not doubt, that, in many cases he is; but it must be that he does not learn them. Of course, some errors in freshman themes are due to carelessness, but it would be folly to blame them all upon it, especially when the pupils often show that they do not know the simplest rules of grammar or of syntax. Furthermore, I cannot see why, if a pupil in high school learned what a paragraph is, he should forget when he comes to college. Neither do I see why, in such a case, he

should misuse or misspell words. It would seem that somewhere in the preparatory years the work was slighted, for it is not only the finer points of rhetoric which are lacking, but also the most fundamental principles of grammar. Perhaps, too, the student has not written enough in high school. The time allotted to composition is, I believe, two-fifths. Whether this is enough or not has no particular bearing here. But I think the status of composition work in many schools is shown by the statement in many freshmen themes on "My Preparatory School Training in English"--"We wrote themes, sometimes they were graded and handed back, and sometimes when they were bad enough they were re-written."

After all this, however, the question arises, What does Rhetoric I accomplish? The query is more easily put than answered and the reply can, in any case, be only relative. But freshman rhetoric at the University does help the student. No matter what drudgery he may consider theme-writing, constant insistence on correct forms has some effect. He learns to write sentences that have both subject and predicate; he learns to manage simple punctuation although the more complicated forms still puzzle him. There is no question, either, but that his diction improves; for he not only learns to use words correctly, but by the end of the year he begins to realize the existence of such a thing as a vocabulary in the finer sense of the word. Then, too, he becomes used to the conventionalities of composition, and apostrophes and capitals are less frequently misused, while paragraphs usually grow longer and more coherent. With such improvements and with the clearer

conception of grammatical principles which the pupil gains, awkward constructions are gradually eradicated, as are unclear and ungrammatical sentences. In general, I think, there is a marked improvement in form as the year advances. How effective the change is I cannot say; but judging from the junior and senior paper which I have seen, I should say that unless the student continues in some course where there is an insistence on form, he soon backslides. For rhetorical principles, like coarser tools, cast with disuse, and unlike other tools, grow keener with use. If, then, Rhetoric I aims to effect a permanent cure, it fails completely in most cases. If it undertakes to prepare the way for other courses, it succeeds very well. This may seem like begging the question; but it appears to be the only satisfactory way of answering, for the course is taken by all the students, and only a small percentage continues in other courses.





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